

DON'T FALL FOR IT ALASKA:



Injuries Are Preventable!

A Guide to Fall Prevention

State of Alaska/DHSS/CHEMS-Injury Prevention Program
PO Box 110616-Juneau Alaska 99811

Objective:

To increase fall prevention awareness for all ages.

Fall injuries are a serious public health problem resulting in pain, suffering, disability, and significant medical and non-medical costs

Falls are not just the result of getting older. Many falls can be prevented. Falls are usually caused by a number of things. By changing some of these things, you can lower your chances of falling.

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FACTS ON FALLS

During the years 1991 through 2000, there were 13,706 fall injuries in Alaska, 166 of which were fatal.

Falls occur to all ages, no one is immune.

Age	Total
0-4	669
5-9	740
10-19	1270
20-29	1251
30-39	1917
40-49	2067
50-59	1554
60-69	1290
70-79	1470
80+	1478

Falls can happen in many ways and anywhere. Most of them can be prevented.

Type of Fall	Number
Slipping/Tripping/Stumbling	5027
Stairs/Steps	1429
Sports	1075
One Level to Another	979
From Furniture	775
From Building/Structure	755
Ladders	695
From Playground Equipment	331
Into Hole	142
From Cliff	120
Other Fall	2378

How does your Region add up?

Injury Region	Number
Aleutian/Pribilof	163
Kenai Peninsula	260
Southeast Alaska	2345
Kodiak	262
North Slope Borough	182
Municipality of Anchorage	5000
Prince William Sound	228
Norton Sound	256
Rural Interior	513
Northwest Arctic	235
Bristol Bay	260
Yukon-Kuskokwim	695
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	1037
Fairbanks North Star Borough	1470
Copper River	60
Unknown	18

Am I at risk?

Do you:

- Have frequent slips, trips, near falls or falls?
- Have difficulty keeping your balance?
- Ever feel dizzy?
- Have foot problems?
- Have weak muscles or stiff joints?
- Have to rush to the bathroom?
- Have vision and/or hearing difficulties?
- Experience difficulty sleeping?
- Experience difficulty concentrating?
- Experience shortness of breath?
- Forget to regularly check for safety hazards in and around the home?
- Walk in places that are uneven, slippery or icy?
- Take three or more medications?
- Drink alcohol frequently?

If you answered yes to the first question, or to three or more of the other questions, you are at risk for a fall. Talk to a health professional now about ways to prevent falls.

Medication

Have your health care provider review your medicines.

Have your doctor or pharmacist look at all the medicines you take (including ones that don't need prescriptions such as cold medicines). As you get older, the way some medicines work in your body can change. Some medicines, or combinations of medicines, can make you drowsy or light-headed which can lead to a fall.

Activity

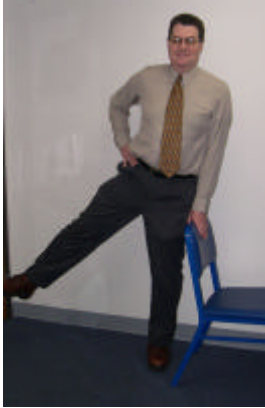
Activity is one key to reduce the risk of falls.

Begin a regular exercise program

- Exercise makes you stronger and helps you feel better. Exercises that improve balance and coordination (like Tai Chi) are the most helpful.
- Lack of exercise leads to weakness and increases your chances of falling.
- Ask your doctor or health care worker about the best type of exercise program for you.

To be sure that the exercises are appropriate for you, have a health care professional review them. Use a sturdy chair so that it does not move while you are performing your exercises. Do a few repetitions at a time and slowly increase repetition until you reach the maximum number. If you feel unsteady or not comfortable performing them by yourself, have someone nearby to perform them with you.

Next four pages –Low impact activity program



Side leg lift

Side leg lift: Hold on to the back of the chair with one hand for support. Slowly raise one leg to the side and put it back down. Try to do this without bending forward. Repeat 6 to 8 times. Turn around and hold on to the chair. Slowly raise the other leg 6 to 8 times.



Back leg lift

Back leg lift: Hold on to the back of the chair with both hands for support. Keep your knee straight and lift your right leg slowly behind you, then put the foot back on the floor. Repeat with the left leg. Alternate lifting the right and left leg 10 times each.



Knee bends

Knee bends: Hold on to the back of the chair with both hands for support. Lift the right foot off the ground by bending the knee and then put the foot back on the floor. Alternate left and right knee bends 10 times each.



Trunk flexing

Trunk flexing: Place hands on hips. Lean gently to the right and hold for 15 seconds. Then lean gently to the left and hold for 15 seconds. Repeat for 2 times. This exercise can also be done while sitting.



Arm circles

Arm circles: Move arms about 6 inches from the sides. Begin arm circles and move arms upward to shoulder height then move down again. Repeat 2 times. This exercise can also be done while sitting.



Sit and Stand

Sit and stand: Sit in the chair. Stand up and sit down 8 times. Pause upon standing so you do not become dizzy. Also pause upon sitting. Repeat for 8 times.



Foot lifts

Foot lifts: Sit in the chair. Lift the leg to straighten the knee, then put the foot back on the floor. Lift one leg for 6-8 times. Repeat with the other leg.



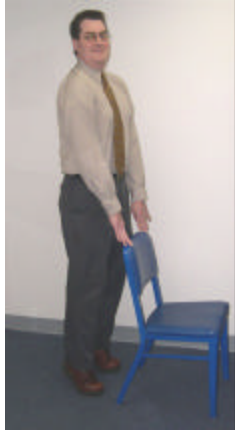
Neck bending

Neck bending: Sit on the chair. Slowly and gently drop your head so the right ear moves toward the right shoulder. Hold for a couple of seconds then slowly move the head back up upright. Repeat 5 times. Then slowly and gently drop your head so the left ear moves slowly toward the left shoulder. Repeat 5 times. Try to keep your shoulders down.



Figure eight

Figure eight: Hold on to the back of the chair with both hands for support. Sway the body in a figure eight motion for 20 seconds. If this makes you feel dizzy, stop and sit down until the dizziness disappears.



Toe rises (Tippy toes)

Toe rises: Hold on to the back of the chair with both hands for support. Stand on your tiptoes then back down. Repeat 10 times. This exercise can also be done while sitting.



Leg stretches

Leg stretches: Hold on to the back of the chair with both hands for support. Step back with one leg. Bend the front leg a little and keep both feet flat. A slight stretch will be felt in the back leg. Repeat 5 times on each leg.

Vision

Have your vision checked.

Have your eyes checked by an eye doctor. You may be wearing the wrong glasses or have a condition such as glaucoma or cataracts that limits your vision. Poor vision can increase your chances of falling.

Environment

Make your home safer.

About half of all falls happen at home. To make your home safer:

- Remove things you can trip over (such as papers, books, clothes, and shoes) from stairs and places where you walk.
- Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep the rugs from slipping.
- Keep items you use often in cabinets you can reach easily without using a step stool.
- Have grab bars put in next to your toilet and in the tub or shower.
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Improve the lighting in your home. As you get older, you need brighter lights to see well. Lamp shades or frosted bulbs can reduce glare.
- Have handrails and lights put in on all staircases.
- Wear shoes that give good support and have thin non-slip soles. Avoid wearing slippers and athletic shoes with deep treads.

Home Safety Checklist

Are the front steps and walkways leading to your house or apartment in good repair?	Yes	No	To Do
Are stairs and walkways kept free of snow, ice or leaves?	Yes	No	To Do
Does the surface of stairs and walkways provide good traction?	Yes	No	To Do
Throw rugs and scatter mats are dangerous. If you insist on having them, do they have non-skid backing to keep them from slipping?	Yes	No	To Do
Can you do without them?	Yes	No	To Do
Are your traffic areas clear of telephone and electrical cords?	Yes	No	To Do
Is your home, including stairwells, well lit?	Yes	No	To Do
Are interior stairs in good condition, with a non-skid surface?	Yes	No	To Do
Are there solid handrails on both sides of the stairways?	Yes	No	To Do
Are stairs free of clutter?	Yes	No	To Do
Do you have a rubber bath mat or a non-slip surface to make your bathtub or shower less slippery?	Yes	No	To Do
If you have trouble getting on and off the toilet, do you have a raised toilet seat and a grab bar?	Yes	No	To Do
In your kitchen, do you have a stable step stool (w/ safety rail) for reaching high places?	Yes	No	To Do
Do you frequently have to walk around furniture in your home?	Yes	No	To Do
Do you have a phone near your bed?	Yes	No	To Do
Do you have nightlights in your bedroom and bathroom?	Yes	No	To Do

For more information contact:

State of Alaska/DHSS/CHEMS
Injury Prevention Program
PO Box 110616
Juneau Alaska 99811
Karen Lawfer (907) 465-8632
Maria Bailey (907) 465-4170

Resources:

Health Canada, Division of Aging and Seniors

Low impact Activity Program

Adapted from Tideiksaar, R. (1997). Falling in old age. Prevention and Management. Springer Publishing Company, (2), 245.

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control on Fall Prevention.

NCPS Fall Prevention

State of Alaska, Section of Community Health & Emergency Medical Services

The Fall Prevention Program Manual-Roberta A. Newton, PhD

The Safe Living Guide, Health Canada–Home Safety Checklist